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## . SERMON XVI.\*

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### THE DUTIES OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANS TO THEIR COUNTRY.

"AND seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."—JEREMIAH 29: 7.

JEREMIAH was a true patriot, a man thoroughly devoted to the welfare of his country. He loved his own nation, and for its welfare he watched, prayed, and labored with all the ardor of enthusiasm; and its miseries he deplored with the most pathetic eloquence. In his prophetic description of the calamities which impended over his country, the most expressive images and the most forcible and pathetic terms are employed; and after he had lived to see his own predictions respecting the desolations of Jerusalem and the captivity of Judah accomplished, his grief finds vent in patriotic tears; he poured forth the effusions of his patri-

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otic heart, and piously wept over the ruins of his beloved country. In the character of a mourner, he celebrates her obsequies in the most plaintive strains, and copiously and tenderly does he bewail her misfortunes. His description of the once flourishing city, lately chief among the nations, sitting in the character of a female, solitary, afflicted, in a state of widowhood, deserted by her friends, betrayed by her nearest connections, imploring relief, and seeking consolation in vain, is very elegant and poetical; and his personification of the ways of Zion mourning, because none are come to her solemn feasts, is most beautiful. And how tender and pathetic is his complaint, as he personifies his land, and speaks in her name, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger!"

As a prophet, during his whole career, Jeremiah exercised his office with great zeal and faithfulness, and notwithstanding his countrymen bitterly opposed him in the conscientious discharge of his duties, and inflicted upon him the most injurious treatment, yet he was still affectionately attached to them. Such was his love to his country and his countrymen, notwithstanding their injurious treatment of him, that he refused the favor of the King of Babylon, who tendered him a home in his palace; and he chose rather to suffer affliction with his own people in his own land, than to be a companion of princes, and to sit at the table of kings! He preferred to abide with the afflicted remnant in the land of Judah, and to share their friendship, rather than separately to enjoy ease and affluence at the court of Babylon.

He did not, however, lose sight of those of his countrymen who were captives in Babylon, but embraced every opportunity that occurred of promoting their welfare. At the time when the words of my text were written, Jeconiah, King of Judah, and the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem, and many of the elders, priests, and prophets, together with many of the common people, had been already carried away captive to Babylon; and as Zedekiah, who now reigned in Jerusalem, was sending ambassadors to the King of Babylon, by these persons an opportunity was afforded Jeremiah of writing to the captives in Babylon and other cities of Chaldea, for their instruction; and in the name of the Lord, therefore, he addressed to them a letter, of which the words of my text form a part. The captives had among them false prophets, who flattered them with the hope of a speedy restoration to their native land, and, deluded by these false predictions, they had grown indifferent to the objects and interests about them. In this letter Jeremiah seeks to counteract the influence of the false prophets, and he exhorts the captives for the present to settle down quietly in Babylon, and not to listen to those who would deceive them; but, at the same time, they are encouraged by the assur-

ance, that, at the expiration of the predicted seventy years, when they should have been cured of their idolatrous propensities, God would restore them. Jeremiah also seeks to comfort these captives by assuring them that they had no reason either to despair of success, or to envy their brethren who still remained in their own land. And as they were not to expect a speedy return to their own country, he exhorts them not to remain in an unsettled condition, but to be patient, contented, industrious, and useful, and to seek to make themselves as comfortable as was consistent with their situation. It is always wise for men to make the best they can of their condition in life, let that condition be what it may; and these captive Jews are exhorted to bring their mind to their condition, and not to refuse the comforts of the land of Babylon, because they were deprived of the comforts of the land of Judah. Instead of growing indifferent to the objects and interests about them, the prophet urges them to seek, rather, the prosperity and happiness of Babylon, or any other city in Chaldea, where they were placed. Chaldea was their home for the time being, and they must be home missionaries, and seek to promote the good of those around them by prayer and all suitable effort. As long as they remained the subjects of the king of Babylon—though he was a heathen, an idolator, an oppressor, and an enemy to God and to his people, yet while he gave them protection, they must pay him allegiance, and live quiet and peaceable lives under him, not plotting to shake off his yoke, but patiently leaving it to God in due time to work deliverance for them. And as long as they resided in the cities of Chaldea they were to be engaged in healthful and well-directed efforts for the good of that land. By prayer and supplication, and other suitable means, they were to seek the security and prosperity of that country. It was their duty to seek the peace and welfare of the land where they dwelt. The word “peace,” as used in Scripture, generally denotes quiet and tranquillity, but it is often used for every kind and degree of prosperity and happiness, as to “*go in peace*,” to “*die in peace*,” “*God give you peace*,” “peace be to this house,” and “pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” To “seek the peace” of a city or country, is to pursue its welfare, to desire its prosperity, to seek to secure for it good of every kind. The term “*peace*” is thus used in our text to denote good at large—every kind and degree of prosperity and happiness.

And if it was the duty of these captive Jews to seek the good of those cities in Chaldea, in which they were to sojourn but for a time, our native land, or the country in which we enjoy all the rights of citizenship, under a good government, must have still stronger claims upon us. And this duty of seeking the good of the land in which we dwell, and the prosperity of the government that affords us protection, is enforced in our text by an argument

taken from self-interest—"In the peace thereof shall ye have peace." When our country is blessed with security and prosperity; when it is in a flourishing state as to its health and trade—we shall have a share in these general advantages; and on the other hand, when our land is distressed with the sword, famine, or pestilence, or any grievous calamity, we shall be involved in the same. A free people, under a good government, should be, above all others, characterized by patriotic feeling, and they should diligently seek to promote the good of their country. In proportion as righteousness generally prevails in our land, and in proportion as our rulers are distinguished for their ability, knowledge, and integrity, we may expect to enjoy great quietness, and to abide in a home of peace, in sure dwellings and in quiet resting-places; and these blessings are necessary to enable us to prosecute successfully the cultivation of godliness. And if a good government, and a quiet, peaceable community, are blessings intimately connected with individual happiness, all are concerned in seeking to secure, and in endeavoring to perpetuate, the possession of these desirable blessings.

Let us now proceed to inquire:

I. What are those things which are absolutely necessary to the security and prosperity, the true glory and the true happiness of our country? II. What are the best means of securing those things which are essential to our country's highest welfare? III. We shall present some arguments to enforce the duties of personal and combined activity in seeking the highest good of our land.

I. Let us inquire, What are those things which are absolutely necessary to the security and prosperity, the true glory and the true happiness of our country?

The wisest of men gave us a sound political maxim when he uttered the proverb: "Righteousness exalteth a nation." The true honor of a nation, like that of an individual, lies in *character*, and the general prevalence of righteousness in the community, both among rulers and people, is necessary to the security and prosperity, the true glory and the true happiness of a nation. "When there is, in any community, the prevalence of true religion, with its inseparable attendants and proportionals, the personal and social virtues, sobriety, justice, mutual integrity and honor, industry and practical benevolence, there are in that community the elements of national greatness, of true, internal, independent happiness, as well as of advancing prosperity and elevation. The tendency of these to promote such results is manifest. They produce peace, union, stability, and concentration of energies, with personal and social, civil and religious liberty. They are, moreover, the means of bringing down the divine blessing on



a country, without which, what is there that can prosper?—without which, all will be failure, all blight and barrenness, all disappointment and discomfiture, all declension and penury, and slow or rapid consumption. The prevalence of impiety, with its accompanying vices, tends, in the very nature of things, to ruin—to ruin both personal and national; and the tendency is aggravated by its withdrawing the protection and smile of the Almighty, the ‘righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness.’”

It is an admired saying of a popular orator, that “no government can long withstand the just claims of a people who have had the courage to conquer their own vices.” Is not the converse of the proposition equally true—that no people can maintain a just government, who are slaves to their own vices? A free government is a government of moral influence. It derives its supremacy, not so much from the pains and penalties of the statute-book, as from the virtue and intelligence of the people. A people, in order to be free, must have the courage to conquer their own vices. Burke has well remarked: “Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put chains upon their own appetites; in proportion as their love of justice is above their rapacity; in proportion as their soundness and sobriety of understanding is above their vanity and presumption; in proportion as they are more disposed to listen to the counsels of the wise and good, in preference to the flattery of knaves. Society can not exist unless a controlling power upon the will and appetites is placed somewhere; and the less of it there is within, the more of it there must be without. It is ordained, in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds can not be free. Passions forge their fetters.” A free government and its institutions can flourish only where intelligence and the civic and moral virtues flourish in the community. “The great comprehensive truths,” says President Quincy, “written in letters of living light on every page of our history, are these: human happiness has no perfect security but freedom; freedom, none but virtue; virtue, none but knowledge; and neither freedom nor virtue has any vigor or immortal hope, except in the principles of the Christian faith, and in the sanctions of the Christian religion.” Religion is the only sure basis of civil society. A genuine Christian principle must pervade and animate the minds of ruler and people, in order to the promotion of pure virtue and sound morals in the nation, and without these, the safety of the state can not be secured. “Animated by Christian principle, the *public functionary* will be devoted to his country’s honor and interests; the *legislator* will feel it to be his solemn duty to enact just laws; the *executive* will see to it that the laws of the land are carried faithfully into execution; the *juror* will act under a deep sense of his solemn responsibility, and the dearest interests of his country

and his fellow-citizens will be safe in his hands. Let our editors and our literary men be actuated by virtuous, patriotic, and truly religious principles, and, in the hands of such men, a *free press* would prove a blessing of inestimable value. Such men would employ the power of the press to exert a salutary influence over the public manners; to pour increasing light on the public mind; to keep steadily before the view of the people their national rights; to fan the sacred flame of patriotism; and to scourge vice and immorality, and make them shrink from the view of the community. In the hands of truly patriotic men, a free press would hold up to the public gaze the conduct of men in office, and keep them under the restraining awe of public sentiment, and in a rigid adherence to the line of their duties; it would sound the alarm at the first encroachment of ambition and power; and it would concentrate a nation's energies in sustaining patriotic men and a virtuous government, and in putting down oppression and tyranny. In this way the influence of the press would be employed in promoting the patriotism of rulers, and the virtues of the people, and in cherishing and sustaining the free institutions of the land. Let the great body of our population be actuated by virtuous and religious principles, and their elective power will be wisely used. They will not bestow places of power and trust on vicious and unprincipled men. The reins of government, and the guardianship of our free institutions will be committed to virtuous and enlightened men, and thus their well-being and perpetuity will be secured."

The security and prosperity, the true glory and the true happiness of our country, are inseparably connected with the advancement of the interests of religion among its inhabitants. Of the contrary, alas! there is a vast and growing amount in our land; and it is aggravated by the greatness and abundance of our privileges—of the light of divine knowledge and the varied *means* of piety and virtue. There are systems in operation, of which the tendency is to the deterioration of all that is good, and the introduction of all that is evil. The Psalmist asks: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Here the pillars or foundations of social order and civil society are represented as destroyed, when truth, righteousness, justice, and virtue no longer prevail, and the intercourse of men, as members of society, is governed by mere selfishness, to the exclusion of the fear of God and correct moral principle. The late Dr. J. A. Alexander, in his *Commentary on the Psalms*, translates the passage as follows: "For the foundations will be cast down, and *what hath the righteous done?*"—that is, "what has he done to prevent such a destruction of the foundations of social order and justice?" "The question," he says, "implies that the righteous has effected nothing *in opposition* to the prevalent iniquity."

If this be the correct rendering of the passage, it only gives the more point and pertinency to it in its application to the times. For, without a question, if all professedly good men in our land, or all who claim to be governed by a regard to the supremacy of God and equal justice to men, had only conscientiously and persistently *done their duty*, irrespective of selfish ends, we should not now have to mourn over the sad spectacle of our beloved nation trembling on the verge of dissolution and ruin. "Our party, right or wrong," has too often been the motto even of Christian men, and it is a motto which has had a most potent influence in loosening the foundations of government and of society. It is an embodiment of real atheism. It leaves moral responsibility to God wholly out of the account. And, if it is *still to be* the motto of Christians—to say nothing of others—sooner or later the work of destroying the foundations will be complete, in spite of all our armies. We shall, too late, learn the meaning of those words of warning: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of Hosts. For of old time, I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands, and thou saidst, I will not transgress. I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how, then, art thou turned into a degenerate plant of a strange vine? Thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord."

II. We proceed to inquire, What are the best means of securing those things which are essential to our country's highest welfare? We have seen that the prevalence of true religion, and its inseparable attendants, intelligence and virtue, are essential to the security and prosperity, the true glory and the true happiness of our country. The question, then, before us, in other words, is simply this: How can we best secure the advancement of the interests of religion, intelligence, and virtue, among the inhabitants of this land?

1. One important means of securing the highest good of our country is the *general diffusion of education*.

"Education," says Edward Everett, "is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army. If we retrench the wages of the schoolmaster, we must raise those of the recruiting-sergeant." The welfare and prosperity of a free nation require a large amount of virtue and intelligence in the mass of the people, and our youth should be properly instructed in the principles of science and literature, and they should receive sound instruction in moral and religious duties. It is easy to see that the cause of popular education is closely connected with the healthy existence of civil society, especially in the form which such society has as-

sumed with us. Having been at liberty to choose a government for ourselves, we have resorted to the republican mode, the first principle of which is, that the people are the source of all political power. We have all assented to this form of government, each individual for himself, and each, therefore, is under contract with all for its preservation. The obligations which the adoption of any form of government imposes on the citizens, do not rest alone in the constitution and laws. Some of the most essential are implied in the very nature of the government adopted. Such are those which have regard to personal character and conduct, and their influence for good or evil on the stability and permanence of the political forms in use.

It is universally conceded that popular intelligence and popular virtue are indispensable to the existence and continuance of such a government as ours; and if so, then, as the character of the public will be what the mass of individual character is, it is the duty of every individual to be virtuous, and to possess a competent degree of intelligence. Every man who has any voice or influence in public affairs, is bound to inform himself and act honestly; for if any one is not, no one is—all are at liberty to be both ignorant and dishonest—and whenever that happens, the government, being in the hands of the people, and swayed by a majority of voices, must become the most odious and oppressive of all tyrannies, and hasten to a violent conclusion. The whole power of the community rests with the majority, and no matter how well defined and strictly guarded the limits of that power may be, by the written terms of the compact, there are constant and strong temptations to exceed those limits, and the grand security rests, and must rest after all, with the intelligence of the majority to discover the proper boundaries of their power, and their sense of moral obligation to keep within them. In other words, the question of the existence and continuance of a popular government is always a question of the existence and continuance of popular intelligence and virtue, and hence the necessity and the obligation of every member of such a community to be educated and to be virtuous.

In a country in which the people are invested with all the political power, and are called upon, at certain periods, to elect the functionaries of government, the importance of having every man qualified to exercise the right of suffrage is most obvious. History teaches us that in popular governments there is a tendency to unsteadiness and fluctuation. The hero of to-day is often the exile of to-morrow. Under the guidance of passion and unprincipled demagogues, deeds of violence are committed, for which no subsequent regrets can make atonement. But teach the people knowledge, and you teach them to detect the sophistries of the artful demagogue. Train and cultivate their intellect, and

you train them to think before they act, to moderate the violence of their passions, and to resist sudden and misguided impulses of feeling. Instruct them in their various and combined interests, and you prepare them to avoid the evils of excessive legislation; and to show their wisdom in other ways than by perpetual changes in their statute-book. You prepare them to rejoice in the success of every branch of honest industry, and to look with other feelings than those of envy on the growing wealth of neighboring nations. Give them enlarged and liberal views of national policy, and inspire them with the true principles of national freedom, and their love of liberty will not degenerate into licentiousness, nor contract into an exclusive and selfish patriotism.

As it is necessary for the people to be *virtuous* as well as intelligent, the education which is necessary for the safety and prosperity of the state comprehends all the instruction, restraints, and moral discipline which are requisite for the government of the passions, the moulding of the affections, the formation of an enlightened conscience, and the renovation of the heart. Moral instruction is quite as important to the object had in view in popular education as intellectual instruction; it is indispensable to that object. But to make such instruction effective, it should be given according to the best code of morals known to the country and the age, and that code it is universally conceded is contained in the Bible. Hence a deist, on one occasion, after publicly laboring to disprove Christianity, and to bring Scripture into contempt as a forgery, was found the next morning instructing his child from the pages of the New Testament. When charged with the flagrant inconsistency, his only reply was that it was necessary to teach the child morality, and that nowhere else was there to be found such pure morality as in the Bible. And that deist was right. It is necessary that children should be taught morality, and for this the Bible is the very best text-book. If we keep in view the object of popular education—the necessity of fitting the people, by moral as well as intellectual discipline, for self-government—no one can doubt that any system of instruction which overlooks the training and informing of the moral faculties, must be wretchedly and fatally defective. Crime and merely intellectual culture, so far from being disassociated in history and statistics, are, unhappily, old acquaintances and tried friends. Knowledge is power, but unsanctified knowledge is *power for evil*. To neglect the moral powers in education is to educate not quite half the man. To cultivate the intellect *only* is to unhinge the mind and destroy the essential balance of the mental powers; it is to light up a recess only the better to show how dark it is. And if this is all that is done in popular education, then nothing, literally nothing, is done toward creating and establishing public



virtue, and forming a moral people. And hence the great importance of our Sabbath-schools, as they supply, in part, the defects of our day-schools. In the Sabbath-school the Bible is the principal text-book, and the principles of its pure morality are brought to bear on the minds of the young. Thus their moral powers are cultivated according to the best standard; and being thus instructed in moral and religious truth, they are taught to feel habitually the force of moral obligation.

2. Another important means of securing the highest good of our nation is *the general distribution of the Bible*. Benjamin Franklin says: "A newspaper and Bible in every house, and a good school-house in every district, all studied and appreciated as they merit, are the principal supporters of virtue, morality, and civil liberty." Dr. Edgar, formerly of Nashville, relates that on one of his visits to General Jackson he found him reading the Bible, and holding up that blessed book in his right hand, the general remarked: "Doctor, this book is the bulwark of our republican institutions—the anchor of our present and future safety." The Bible is the great instrument for enlightening the intellect and purifying the heart. When the mind is brought into contact with its stupendous truths, it is elevated and endowed with new vigor; and when the intellect attempts to grasp and measure the great truths of the Bible by this very process, the mental powers are enlarged and strengthened. And the general diffusion of the Bible is one of the very best means to civilize and humanize mankind; to purify and exalt the general system of public morals; to give efficacy to the just precepts of international and municipal law; to enforce the observance of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude; and to improve all the relations of social and domestic life. It is well known that there exists a system of moral duties which are considered to be of imperfect obligation because they are not within the cognizance of human laws. Such, among others, are the duties of charity, benevolence, gratitude, the domestic affections, and the love of our neighbor. These are necessarily left by human law-givers, in a great degree, to the government of conscience. But the Bible takes notice of all such duties. It most pointedly condemns every species of cruelty, unkindness, uncharitableness, and selfishness, and hardness of heart; and it comes in aid of the civil law by the universality and the precision of its commands, and by the energy and severity of its denunciations. Human laws labor under many other great imperfections. They extend to external actions only. They can not reach that catalogue of secret crimes which are committed without any witness, save the all-seeing eye of that Being whose presence is every where, and whose laws reach the hidden recesses of vice, and carry their sanctions to the thoughts and intents of the heart. In this view, the teachings of the Bible supply all the deficiencies of



human laws, and lend an essential aid to the administration of justice.

As far as the influence of the Bible is felt in our nation, the tendency is to strengthen and establish the foundations of our national freedom and happiness. The Bible in every house, read and appreciated according to its true merit, would be the salt of the nation and the light of the land. Take away its restraining influence from the nation, and the degradation of the great mass of the people would at once commence, and it would go on and increase until liberty was extinct, and the reign of anarchy or despotism would commence. The principles of the Bible must lie at the foundation of every edifice of human happiness, and when this corner-stone is removed the building must fall. Let the influence of the Bible be thoroughly felt through the length and breadth of our land, and our country will be safe; let its influence cease from the minds of our citizens and our republic, with its free institutions, will totter and fall. God has said: "The nation and kingdom that will not serve me shall perish;" and proud and fearless of Heaven as we may be, in one hour our destruction may come. The recent facts in our history go to show that God never lacks for instruments to punish a land for its crimes. In our country's bosom lie the materials of ruin, which wait only the divine permission to burst forth in terrific eruption, scattering far and wide the fragments of our national greatness.

To save our land, we need the personal and the combined activity of the friends of the truth and of true religion, to diffuse right principles, and thus to counter-work the spread and influence of wrong ones. And no better *moral* means can be employed to check the progress of error and the reign of vice than the free and general distribution of the Bible. Let us give to the destitute with an unsparing hand that Book which is the aliment of the moral principle. We can not, if we would, sink our countrymen into slaves, and our aim should be to elevate them to the rank of virtuous freemen. Let the circulation of the Bible be commensurate with our population; let it be placed in every dwelling; let it be sent to every cabin in the remotest wilderness. The Bible can do more for the security of our country than our ablest generals. It can preserve her domestic tranquillity, and transmit her whole circle of blessings to the latest posterity better than could hosts of standing armies. The true friend of his country will plant the rose of Sharon in the midst of her moral deserts.

3. Another important means of securing the highest good of our country is *the preaching of the gospel*. The gospel of the grace of God, in its heaven-born simplicity, is the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. This is the only remedy for the moral and spiritual evils under which our nature groans. What does a sinning, suffering world need? For what does

humanity groan? Not the dreams of the recluse—not the speculations of the philosopher. Greece had her fill of wordly wisdom, and in her “wisdom knew not God.” In our own day, Germany has become the seat of philosophy; and Germany, like Greece, is rushing into atheism. The gospel is the only thing in the universe which is able to make wise unto salvation. This is a guilty world; and it needs pardon of sin and restoration to the divine favor. It is a suffering world; and it needs consolation. It is a polluted world; and it needs sanctification. It is a dying world; and it needs assured immortal hopes. Would you mock its hungerings by giving it “a stone?” Would you deride its woes by offering the vain speculations of a fellow-man in the place of the sure Word of God, on which the soul may rest for ever? God’s plan is different: “For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.” “Christ crucified,” and the gospel which unfolds his divine mission, constitute the only adequate remedy for the sins and the woes of a rebel race. Nothing but the gospel can elevate and save. The will of man is too perverse to yield to mere human teachings. The affections are too depraved to be changed by the abstractions of the schools. These fall on the unrenewed heart like the moonbeams on the iceberg. The human understanding is too darkened to comprehend the wire-drawn distinctions and endless involutions of metaphysical science. Even in this land of comparative light, not one in a thousand of the people cares a groat for the questions about which metaphysicians strive; and fewer still would be made better or worse if they could understand the points in controversy. But they *can* grasp the leading doctrines of the cross. Even the child can comprehend all of truth that is essential to salvation—all that leads to heaven and enters there. It is just these truths that the people—all the people—need. It is to these that the promises of God apply. It is these, and these alone, that the Holy Spirit blesses. It is converting, sanctifying truth, and not speculations about truth, that a free nation needs for all its masses, or it will run riot with errors in every form, and will become the haunt of vice of every grade. *Isms* have no saving power; the gospel has. Our nature is a wreck, a chaos, which the Cross of Calvary alone can adjust. There is an aching void in our hearts which the gospel only can fill. There are pantings and longings in our nature which the cross alone can satisfy. As the story of the cross is proclaimed, and God’s plan of saving sinners is unfolded, this truth, attended by the Spirit’s power, becomes a renovator of the heart. The guilty conscience is cleansed, the proud heart humbled, and the reluctant will subdued. All the powers of the man are won over to the obedience of the faith. Men become new creatures in their relation to God and to each other.

Each new power is drawn forth into the service of God, all the graces of the Spirit shine forth in their beauty and loveliness, ungodliness and worldly lusts are denied, and the subject of the heavenly change "lives soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world." Where the gospel triumphs, men are not only prepared for the heavenly world, but for the earthly world. Industry, frugality, and honesty now exercised are promotive of personal and social enjoyment. All the conveniences and comforts of life are multiplied. A gradual elevation, intellectually, morally, and socially, is seen in the community. The gospel breathes peace on earth and good-will to men. Its object is to chase away darkness from the human soul, and thence from the community, by the diffusion of heavenly knowledge. It breathes the spirit of liberty in all things, civil and religious; it calls on men to consider this as their inalienable birthright as the freedmen of the Lord. It awakens man to a deep sense of his dignity and worth as an immortal being, and fastens upon him a deep impression of his individual responsibility to God. This gospel breathes death to tyranny and oppression, and constrains men to fear God, to honor the magistracy, and to love all men. It brings health and salvation to man's soul, for it is the very instrument by which the Holy Spirit begets the new life and all the elementary principles of the purest virtues. These Christian graces in the soul lead to virtuous actions in the life—to the exhibition of a morality that throws a lustre over the human character, and renders man a blessing to his family, to society, and to his country.

Now, such being its influence on individual character, it is obvious that wherever its pure and subduing spirit exerts its power over a land, it must chase away darkness from its population, it must banish vice and folly, it must lessen crimes, it must beget an enlightened reverence for the laws, it must make good citizens, it must thence lend a vigor to the arm of justice and strength to the hands which administer its laws; it must pour the most salutary influence on every portion of our population. The preached gospel has an elevating effect on the general morality of a neighborhood, even in addition to the souls spiritualized and christianized by its instrumentality. For every man that is savingly converted, there is a sort of guarantee that perhaps fifty others will be elevated somewhat in the morality of their habits. Christians are "the salt of the earth," and as there is a small proportion, in point of bulk, between the salt and the thing salted, so spiritual men may bear a small proportion to the society in which they are placed, and yet the whole of that society may be indebted to them for its very continuance—just as the thing salted is prevented from falling into dissolution by the small quantity of salt. Christians, in the same way, are the salt of the society in which they are placed, by exerting a purifying and preserving influence. Our

secular politicians and philosophers little think how much they are indebted to Christian influence and example for the highest civil blessings they enjoy. Religion is the conservative influence of society; and by the influence of the gospel, wherever it prevails, the population at large are made more manageable, more civilized, and more orderly; and let this world be deprived of an evangelical and practical Christianity, and the whole of society would soon hasten to dissolution.

Now, as the preaching of the gospel is God's appointed plan for the instruction and reformation of mankind; as the public proclamation of Christ crucified is the great appointed means of salvation, to which all other means, however important, are either preparatory or subordinate; and as this means is so effectual in promoting the security and prosperity—the true glory and the true happiness of our country—should not this means be prosecuted with the utmost vigor? Should we not exert ourselves to the full extent of our ability, in seeking, by town and city missions, and country missions, to circulate light and dissipate darkness—to bring every part of our land under the leavening influence of the great truths of the gospel? The living teacher should be sent to every destitute field, that God may be glorified, the souls of men saved, and the best interests of our country promoted.

4.—I will notice one more means of securing the highest good of our country, and that is the means particularly mentioned in our text—*Prayer*. “Seek the peace of the city, and pray unto the Lord for it.” The *moral* means on which I have dwelt, however faithfully employed, will be successful only as God crowns them with his blessing; and his interposition is granted in answer to prayer. In employing these means the Christian seeks supremely the salvation of souls, but without the converting power of the Holy Spirit not a single soul will ever be saved; and it is in answer to prayer that his saving power is given. And then, too, the Bible teaches us that prayer is useful in procuring blessings for communities as well as for individuals and families. And in our text, the captives in Babylon are not merely directed in a general way to seek the welfare of that land, but they are specially directed to *pray* for its peace or prosperity. And in answer to the prayers of the pious captives, the surprising change may have taken place in the character of Nebuchadnezzar; and Daniel and his companions ~~may~~ have been raised to distinction in that land to befriend the captives; and the favorable decrees passed for the benefit of the Jewish people by Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes, and others, may all have been secured by persevering prayer. The hearts of all kings are in the hand of the Lord, and he can turn them as the rivulets of water, whithersoever he will. Paul exhorts Christians to make “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men—for kings, and for all that

are in authority—that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” God said to Solomon (2 Chron. 7: 13, 14): “If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people—if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” And by their prayers, Christians now, in this crisis of our national history, may do much to avert evil and to secure good for our country; and this means of seeking the welfare of our land should be tried to the utmost. We believe the power of prayer for our country has never yet been fully tested. Without doubt, many sincere and humble prayers have arisen, and are now ascending to Heaven, in behalf of our guilty land; but it is greatly to be feared that many Christian people fail to offer that earnest prayer of faith for our common country, for our rulers, and for all our people, that God requires.

When Abraham learned that God was about to destroy Sodom, he at once interceded with God on the behalf of that guilty city. Feeling that he had an interest at the throne of grace, he made use of it on behalf of his ungodly neighbors. He entreated that the city might be spared, or at least the righteous men in it; and as an answer to his prayer, God assured him that if ten righteous men could be found in the Cities of the Plain he would spare those cities, and not consign them to the punishment which their sins had so eminently deserved.

In the history of Moses we learn that on one occasion the children of Israel treated him, and even Jehovah himself, with the most insolent contempt, by making a golden calf, and falling down and worshipping it; and God “said that he would destroy them, had not Moses, his chosen, stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them” (Ps. 106: 23). On that remarkable occasion God said to Moses: “Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation” (Ex. 32: 10). Under these circumstances, what did Moses do? Did he stand aside, and let God do as he said? No; his mind runs back to the Egyptians, and he thinks how they will triumph. “Wherefore,” he asks, “should the Egyptians speak, and say: For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?” By prayer, therefore, he took hold of the uplifted arm of Jehovah, and averted the blow. God seemed unable to deny any thing to such importunity, and thus Moses stood in the gap and prevailed with God. So again, when the people complained against God, and against Moses, and the fire of God consumed them in their camps;



*"when Moses prayed unto the Lord the fire was quenched"* (Num. 11: 1, 2). So, also, when the spies brought back an evil report from the land of Canaan, and the people, in despondency, determined to throw off their allegiance to God and to Moses, and to return back to Egypt, the Lord again threatened to destroy them, as if weary of forbearing, and again the prayers of Moses saved them from immediate destruction.

And other examples of the power of prayer are recorded in the Bible. When the Philistines fought against Israel, and Samuel cried unto the Lord on their behalf, "the Lord thundered with a great thunder that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel." It was thus, in the language of the Psalmist, God honored "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the Lord, and he answered them" (Ps. 99: 6). Jehoshaphat on one occasion heard of a great multitude coming against him in battle. It was a critical moment in the history of the kingdom of Judah. Jehoshaphat was greatly alarmed, but immediately "set himself to seek the aid of the Lord, and had a fast proclaimed" throughout the whole of his kingdom. The people themselves were so deeply impressed with the importance of the proclamation, that with one heart they came up from all parts of the land to the temple to ask the help of the Lord in their distress. They even brought "their wives and their little ones" with them to the place appointed. The king himself led in their devotions, making most fervent prayer for success against their enemies. Nor did they pray in vain. Their enemies were completely routed, and left on the field "multitudes of dead, and great abundance of riches and jewels" (2 Chron. 20).

And similar illustrations of the power of prayer we have on record in more modern times. John Knox, the great Scottish reformer, was a man famous for his power in prayer. Such was his love to his country that the burden of his prayer to God was: "Give me Scotland, or else I die." Queen Mary said of him that she feared his prayers more than an army of ten thousand men. And events showed that she had reason to do it. He used to be in such an agony for the deliverance of his country that he could not sleep. He had a place in his garden where he used to go to pray. One night he and several friends were praying together, and as they prayed, Knox spoke, and said that deliverance had come. He could not tell what had happened, but he felt that in some way their prayers had been answered. And the next news informed them that their enemy, Mary, Queen of Scotland, was dead.

At one time in the history of the Lutheran reformation, soon after the conference at Ausburgh in 1530, when the cause of the reformers wore a very threatening aspect, Melancthon, with Lu-



ther and other divines, met together to consult about the measures to be adopted in that trying exigency; and, after spending some time in prayer to God, from whom alone they could expect adequate assistance, Melancthon was suddenly called out of the room, from which he retired under great depression of spirits. He saw, during his absence, some of the elders of the reformed churches, with their parishioners and families. Several children were also brought, hanging at the breast; while others, a little older, were engaged in prayer. This reminded him of the language of the Psalmist: "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger" (Ps. 8:2). Animated by this interesting scene, he returned to his friends with a disencumbered mind and a cheerful countenance. Luther, astonished at this sudden change, asked: "What now? what has happened to you, Philip, that you are become so cheerful?" "Oh, sirs," replied Melancthon, "let us not be discouraged, for I have seen our noble protectors, and such as I will venture to say will prove invincible against every foe." "And pray," returned Luther, thrilling with surprise and pleasure, "who and where are these powerful heroes?" "Oh," said Melancthon, "*they are the wives of our parishioners and their little children*, whose prayers I have just witnessed—prayers which I am satisfied our God will hear; for, as our heavenly Father and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has never despised nor rejected our supplications, we have reason to trust that he will not in the present alarming crisis." The event proved that Melancthon was not mistaken. God heard their prayers. (Cox's *Life of Melancthon*.) In the annals of English history we have an equally striking instance of the interposition of Heaven in answer to prayer. At the period alluded to, the reformation in England had struggled through the tortures of the rack and the fires of Smithfield, and been established in fear and hesitation at the accession of Elizabeth, and almost every thing seemed to predict its speedy extinction. Its politic friends trembled at their own work, and calculated whether it might not fall and crush them. Within, there were division, faction, treachery—without, there was a mustering of the might of Europe to crush the movement in its birth. At a time when England was little conversant with war, and miserably defective in military science, a fleet such as the world had never seen, and a veteran army inured to conquest and led by skilful captains, were sent to her shores to drive her people with sword and fire into the idolatries which they had abjured. The "Invincible Armada" of Spain had been fitted up at a prodigious expense, and sent forth to reduce England to the Catholic faith. The Prince of Parma stood ready also to transport a veteran force of thirty thousand men to the coast of England to assist Spain in carrying out her designs. Immense preparations

were made for the conquest, and the Protestants of Europe naturally regard with intense interest the approach of a contest which was probably to decide the fate of their religion, and the pious would feel that their help was in God alone. As if to show how little the might and wisdom of England's rulers could avail to her deliverance, or be the instruments of safety, her raw militia were placed under the command of a knight whose notorious incapacity gave too sure a promise of disgrace and discomfiture. Romanism exulted throughout her many kingdoms, and raised the jubilant shout of anticipated triumph when the Spanish Armada spread its sails to the winds, while the heart of Protestantism died within her. It was indeed Jerusalem girdled once more by the overwhelming army of Sennacherib. But the destroying angel was sent down to her defense, and the raging tempest was as fatal as the midnight blast that breathed upon the sleeping Assyrians. Those ships that reached the shores of Britain were only drifted thither as helpless wrecks, and the ocean was encumbered with ruins and carcasses; while the winds and waves of that sea-girt island lifted up their voices in a language which the whole world could hear and understand, as they thundered in the ears of nations, "This is the finger of God!"

And had prayer nothing to do with this remarkable deliverance? Fuller, the British church historian, relates, as that which he had received from witnesses beyond exception, the following anecdote of John Fox, the author of the *Book of Martyrs*: "In the year 1588, when the *Spanish half-moon* did hope to rule all the motion in our seas, Master John Fox was privately in his chamber battering heaven with his importunity in behalf of this sinful nation. And we may justly presume that his devotion was as actually instrumental to the victory as the wisdom of our admiral, the valor of his soldiers, and the skill and industry of his seamen. On a sudden, coming down to his parish, he cried out: '*They are gone! they are gone!*' Which, indeed, happened at the same instant, as by exact computation did afterward appear." (Abel Redivius, pp. 381, 382. Neal's History, vol. 1, p. 186.) The prayers of Isaiah, Hezekiah, and others, secured the destruction of the Assyrian army; and, in like manner, the prayers of John Fox and others secured the destruction of the Spanish fleet. The King of Spain and other enemies of England claimed that the ruin of the Spanish fleet brought no glory to Britain, as the ruin was accomplished by the violence of storms and tempests, and not by the bravery of the English. But Queen Elizabeth, so far from looking on this as a diminution of her honor, gloried in it as a signal favor of Providence; and to commemorate the defeat of the invincible Armada of Spain, she had a medal struck, on the reverse of which is represented a fleet beaten by a tempest, and the ships falling foul upon one another, with this religious in-

scription: "*Affluit Deus et Dissipantur*"—"God blew on them, and they were scattered."

In the early history of this country there was a remarkable instance of divine interposition in answer to prayer. In 1746, a French fleet was fitted out under the Duke d'Anville, of forty ships of war, and destined for the destruction of New-England. This fleet was of sufficient force to render that destruction, in the ordinary progress of things, certain; and it sailed from Chebucto, in Nova Scotia, for that purpose; but it was entirely destroyed by a terrible tempest on the night following a day of general fasting and prayer throughout New-England.

These facts show that prayer has power to avert national calamities, and to draw down the divine blessing upon communities, and they enforce the duty of earnest and continuous prayer for our country. And never did our country more need our importunate and believing prayers than at this time. Clouds have darkened our horizon, and caused some at least to fear for the continuance of our privileges, and it becomes us to beseech Him who controls the destinies of nations not to give us over in our sins, but to "turn us again, and to cause his face to shine" from behind the cloud, that we may be saved. Much wisdom is needed in the councils of our nation and in the administration of affairs; and we should pray for our rulers and "for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Let us pray that oppression may not lengthen her galling chain, that liberty may be secured to all, and that our national conflict may soon end in a righteous peace. This struggle has not taken place without the divine will, and let us pray that it may be controlled by divine power and conducted by divine wisdom to issues promotive of God's glory, and of truth and righteousness.

III. We shall now, in conclusion, very briefly present some considerations to enforce the duties of personal and combined activity in seeking the highest good of our land.

1. We should seek our country's welfare, because our own individual good is intimately connected with the general happiness and prosperity of the nation. This argument, taken from self-interest, is presented in our text: "Seek the peace of the city—for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." Every passenger is concerned in the safety of the ship in which he sails. Every citizen of a free government enjoys many rights and privileges in common with others, and what affects the general interest of one citizen will have its bearing on the condition of all. Society is made up of individuals, and those laws and principles of government and influences that affect society at large, affect the individuals of which that society is composed. And self-interest demands that we should seek to evangelize all who come under the influ-

ence of our institutions. The land in which we are permitted to dwell is yet to be the theatre of mighty events both in church and state. It is capable of sustaining a countless population, and men of all nations are pressing to our shores. God has a design in this mingling of nations and races—it *may* be to give us the opportunity, if we will seize it, to mould them, instrumentally, into the Christian image, or to use them to scourge us if we are unfaithful to our trust. These multiplied thousands of foreigners of different habits, faith, and hopes from ourselves, are our fellow-sovereigns. They choose with us the law-makers, and they will exert an influence either in sustaining or subverting our constitutions. They will do their part in forming the public opinion which is to govern the land, and if healthy influences are not brought to bear upon them they may spread corrupting influences which shall undermine our free institutions. Let Christians sleep, and let popery and infidelity and superstition manufacture public opinion, and the foundations of our religious faith will be undermined, and immorality and crime will be openly prevalent, and our civil privileges will soon be lost. The character of the people who occupy the new States and Territories of our country, unless cast into an evangelical mould, will, unavoidably, receive the impress of infidelity and error and vice; and with greater certainty than we now anticipate, may, in time, impart it to our whole country. And what is done this very *year* for our newly-settled and settling Territories, while yet in their embryo state, may determine their complexion and character for all coming time. And as our own individual interests are bound up with whatever affects the security and prosperity—the true glory and the true happiness of our country—our personal and combined activity should be called forth in seeking its highest good.

2. We should seek the highest good of our country, because by showing a genuine love for it, and seeking its true welfare, we do much to recommend the religion we profess. Patriotism is a part of religion, and he who is a true lover of God will be a genuine lover of his country also. It is true the Bible knows nothing of national antipathies, but, on the contrary, condemns the wicked and absurd prejudice which leads the people of one land to hate those of another, because they are under another government, talk another language, and are separated from them by a sea, a river, or a landmark. Still, in caring for our own land there are grounds of affection, and motives for benevolent action, which do not appertain to any other. One of these is *contiguity*. We are bound to do good to all men as we have opportunity, and we have better opportunities for doing good to those who are near than to those who are distant. The people who are starving at the antipodes ought to receive our bounty as soon and as far as we can send it to them, but the man who has just dropped down in utter

exhaustion, and is dying at our door, has especial claims upon us. We must care for the perishing heathen—but shall we forget the perishing American? To the former we can send missionaries, to the latter we can go ourselves. It will be to our shame to seem to care for *the distant heathen*, and yet to entirely neglect those who breathe the same air, and reside in the same vicinity. Our countrymen and neighbors and fellow-citizens must not be overlooked in our benevolent efforts. The best way to benefit the world at large is to fill the sphere around us *first* with Christian influence; and in doing this we shall be multiplying agencies for extending Christian influence gradually throughout the whole world. Home missions and foreign missions have both of them claims upon us, and the work of one can not be severed from that of the other. All we do for home is, in an indirect manner, something done for other lands. By spreading religion here, we are raising friends and funds for foreign missions. Our churches and schools, as fast as they are formed, are pressed in as auxiliaries to our missionary societies.

One nation has no more right to seek its own public interests exclusively, or in opposition to the public interests of other nations, than one member of the same family has to seek his own private interests exclusively, or in opposition to the private interests of the rest of the family. But as we elevate the character of our nation we confer a good upon other nations, for just in proportion to the elevation of its character, will the influence of its example be felt for good in other lands and nations.

3. Lastly, we should seek our country's welfare, because the work of supplying our land with the preached gospel and with religious institutions is the most important work to which the Christians in America are called at this time to devote their energies. A more important, or a more promising field can nowhere be found on the face of the globe, and the cultivation of this field belongs especially to us. This work has an overwhelming importance, because of the magnitude of our territory, the multitude of our people, the vastness of our wealth, the greatness of our power, and the influence of our example. What a vast field for Christian labors the Western States of themselves present. Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska, all present to us the Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us;" they all need missionary aid. These Western States have ten times the extent in territory of all the New-England States, and they all have urgent need of men to preach the gospel in their rising cities and on their broad prairies. In addition to these Western States, there are vast fields to be occupied in the Rocky Mountain slopes. By these terms we embrace the entire portion of our country west of Nebraska, containing nearly or quite one million square miles, or about one third of the



whole territory of the United States. Into this territory, with the exception of California, great tides of population are now pouring. For though some parts are barren, and some rugged, cold, and mountainous, a great gold and silver bearing belt stretches across it from north to south, even to the Rocky Mountains, in whose ledges is incalculable wealth. Cities of considerable magnitude are already springing up in Colorado, Nevada, and Idaho Territories; and missionaries should be sent at once to look after the spiritual welfare and learn the wants of those rising communities. Then, too, California and Oregon and Washington Territory have lost none of their importance. Great States are destined to grow up on the Pacific coast, and their commerce and agriculture, independently of mineral resources, will sustain a great population. In addition to all this, as fast as the rebellion is suppressed, there opens to us a field of missionary operations in the Southern States, from the most of which we had been excluded.

This is a brief outline of the present and prospective work of home missions. Who does not see that with such immense Territories opening to us all at once, at the West and South, the dawn of a new era in home missionary operations is breaking on our vision? and that more prayer and larger contributions are demanded of the church? And can there be a more important object of zeal for American Christians than their own country—the supplying of our rapidly increasing population with able, faithful ministers? Our religious policy must be a *home* policy. The waste places of our homestead must be cultivated. On our land hang, in a great measure, the future interests of the globe. Hence the unspeakable importance of our churches concentrating, in a great measure, their religious efforts upon their own country. Oh, if this country, “beautiful for situation,” with boundless resources and prospects of dazzling brightness, would but consecrate its wealth, sanctify its talent, apprehend its responsibilities, and direct its power in the path of true greatness, its destiny would be as full of glory as its present position is replete with danger. Ere long it would be “the joy of the whole earth.” The world would have before it, on a vast scale, an illustration of the divine precept, “Righteousness exalteth a nation.”

Does not every aspect of this subject give fresh impulse to Christian zeal, and summon every Christian and every Christian institution to renewed effort and prayer? Our hope for our country is in God, and in the gospel of his Son. That gospel is our pole-star and compass. It will guide America to a destiny of goodness and of glory, and fill the world with light and salvation.



## SERMON XVII.

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## MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."—Acts 20 : 35.

THIS statement is in direct conflict with the most cherished sentiments and the almost universal practice of mankind. The great mass of men repudiate the doctrine; they do not believe a word of it; and they base life and action on the very reverse principle. And yet the Bible is clear and explicit in its teachings on this point.

The doctrine of the text is one of the fundamental principles of God's economy; it has its foundation in the divine nature, and pervades the whole system of the divine government. It is simply the law of benevolence; and if men would universally recognize the claims of this divine law, and render obedience to it, it would convert this world into a paradise.

Sin is *selfishness*. It arrays man against this divine law. It puts *self* before the brotherhood; makes *self* the center and end of life; asserts that the highest duty of man and the greatest good consist in receiving and enjoying. And herein lies its enormity. The glory of God, the general good, the divine law of happiness, are all sacrificed to the demand of an all-engrossing selfishness.

The doctrine of the text is, that it is better to impart good than to receive it, better to give away than to hoard, better to serve than to be ministered to, better to seek out and relieve the poor and care for the afflicted and perishing, than to have supreme regard for self, and to study and seek, as the end of life, self gratification; in other words, that there is a higher and purer happiness, and a surer and more blessed prosperity, resulting from the practice of Christian benevolence than from the indulgence of selfishness.

It is a blessed experience to *receive* good at the hands of our fellow-men. The sympathy of friends, in times of joy and of sor-

row, is sweet; and help rendered in the day of need, is most grateful. It is a blessed experience to *enjoy* the favors of a bountiful Providence—to receive into our souls the light and love and grace of God our Saviour. No one doubts this. But the text affirms that it is *more blessed still to bestow upon others*; to enrich our fellow-men with the affluence of our sympathy and love and kind services; to serve God and the world in the exercise of a lofty Christian benevolence; to be one's self a living center of light and good and blessed influence to our fellow-men.

This is the principle. Let us apply it in a few particulars.

1. *It is more blessed to communicate useful knowledge of any kind than merely to acquire it.* There is a love of knowledge for its own sake. A Newton finds rational and sublime enjoyment in piercing the thick veil which envelops nature, in grasping and controlling the most subtle of her elements, in measuring and weighing the worlds and systems which roll through infinite space, and ascertaining the laws which govern the material kingdom of God. A Bacon finds rational delight in exploring the secret chambers of the mind; in pushing investigation into new fields of thought and inquiry, exposing false theories in mental science, shedding fresh light on the human mind, and demonstrating the harmony of philosophy with the teachings of the Scriptures. A Cuvier finds a lofty and ennobling pleasure in delving among the fossil remains of former life, and, by study and comparison and patient and thorough investigation, refuting the theories of infidel science in regard to the antiquity of man's creation, and establishing the truth of the Mosaic account. And so of Hugh Miller, and our own Hitchcock, in collecting testimony from the rocks, from ocean caverns and river beds, from mountain and valley, from living and from extinct animal tribes and types of life, to illustrate the infinite wonders of God's creation, and the essential harmony of Geology and Revelation.

Such men find a high and a real pleasure in the pursuit of their favorite studies. The mental excitement connected with it; the expansion and ennobling of the mind by means of it; the discovery of new truths, new harmonies, and new evidences to confirm the faith; and especially the enlarged capacity to understand and appreciate God—the sum of all the philosophies, and the end of all being and all economies—are an abundant reward for all the toil bestowed.

But such men are not satisfied with knowledge simply *acquired*. Knowledge is not the end they seek—only the means. To enrich the world with the fruit of their superior wisdom, to open new fountains in the desert to refresh and gladden the race, to hold forth the torch of truth in order to dispel the ignorance and superstition of mankind and lift them up into a higher intelligence

and virtue, is their ambition and ultimate aim. This it is that cheers the student at the midnight lamp, that lifts him above the mere desire for gain and applause, that makes him strong and heroic in his task of climbing the mountains of human thought and study. Those serene and lofty heights he would reach, not to gratify a selfish vanity and dream away an isolated existence, but that he may carry down into the plain the lessons learned on the mount, and impart to others his inspired visions and choicest treasures.

Newton, we are told, "held it as his highest glory, not simply that he had gone farther than any other man in his researches, and enlarged the boundary of his knowledge, but to have made the evidence of God's existence, and the dispensations of his power and wisdom, better understood by men." Noble sentiment! That great mind found it more blessed to give forth its wonderful treasures of knowledge than to drink in the truth.

There is a pleasure in giving from our choicest stores of wisdom and knowledge for the benefit of others, slowly and painfully as we have acquired them, which is denied to the man who would hoard them, and use them only for selfish ends. There is a peculiar, a divine satisfaction felt in teaching rational mind; in kindling the divine intelligence with the fire of immortal thought. Do you doubt it? Take that ignorant and degraded boy out of the street; teach him knowledge; wake up and guide that immortal principle which now sleeps in his soul; fill his mind with God and with the noble lessons of Bible wisdom, and make of him, with God's blessing, a wise, thinking, virtuous, and useful man—and you will find a reward in doing it which no wealth can purchase.

Now, the highest and most important of all knowledge is that which the *Bible* contains. Here are treasured the riches of God's infinite mind. Here life and immortality are brought to light. Here are the "deep things" of wisdom—the knowledge which makes wise unto salvation. This is the end of all philosophies, the sum of all the sciences. To fear God and keep his commandments, is the highest virtue: and the making known of this divine word to men who are perishing in the ignorance and guilt of sin, is the highest happiness we know any thing of. The angels of heaven would gladly vacate their seats for the privilege of doing it. There is no work which brings man so nigh to God as this. There is no blessing so divine as that which comes upon one from souls reached by the gospel and saved through his means. Such trophies form a "crown of rejoicing" such as no warrior or victor in the race for earthly good ever won.

Oh, if it is blessed to feel and know that one's self is forgiven and accepted; to have the divine favor freely imparted to the soul; to taste of the love of God, and the joy of his salvation, and the preciousness of Christ, from day to day—it is more

blessed still to impart of our experience to others; to tell friends and neighbors what God has done for us; to hold forth the Word of Life to our fellow-sinners, and strive to kindle in their hearts the joys and hopes which animate our own. The Christian who puts his "light under a bushel," who confine his religious knowledge and experience to his own breast, who lives for his own salvation solely, rather than for Christ and the salvation of others, acts a part as unwise and injurious to himself as it is unworthy of his profession, and contrary to the spirit and principles of Christianity. A Christian never has so much light in his own mind as when he is shedding most light on the minds of others. His own experience of Christ is most precious when he is doing most to make him known to others. If he comes to act on the selfish principle which is dominant in the world, all his satisfaction in the service of Christ will quickly be lost. Failing to minister to others, his own soul will become barren. Absorbing all the light of God's grace, instead of reflecting it, his own mind will become darkened, and his confidence and integrity will slip away from him.

2. It is far more blessed to honor God with our substance than to acquire it for its own sake, or to spend it in self-gratification. There are men whose sole anxiety is to make money. Life's one end and great struggle with them, is to accumulate riches. Their only happiness is the sordid one of adding dollar to dollar, house to house, farm to farm. They are dissatisfied and miserable unless they are every day adding to their earthly gains. They never spend, willingly, never give away, never put to benevolent use, what, through God's blessing, they have acquired. *Gather together and hold on to it*—this is their disposition and the sum of life.

There are others who lavish their all on *self-gratification*. They are free and generous in spending, but it is only in the line of selfishness. They indulge their tastes and appetites, gratify pride and ambition, and aggrandize their family; and this is all the benefit they derive from wealth. They take no higher view of their stewardship than this. They toil and win only to squander it in a way that is most offensive to God, and injurious to themselves. They have no conception of the true end of wealth.

As a *means of usefulness*, wealth is a blessing. It is an ennobling work, in which we do find men engaged, trading, toiling, and giving their time and energy to business, that they may devote the fruits of it to Christ and his cause. Such men acquire money for a benevolent end. And they find it blessed to toil for it, and blessed to disburse it. Thus sought and thus expended, it becomes one of the choicest means of happiness as well as of good.

There is no man really so poor as he who multiplies the means

of life and knows not how to use them, so as to make himself and others happy. His wealth is all in dust, which will one day be scattered to the winds, when it might be converted by him into the blessings of many ready to perish, and a name which is as ointment poured forth. The life of such a one is as barren of good as the heath which drinks in the rain and the sunshine, but gives back no verdure or fertility. With the means of making himself and others happy, he lives only to be despised and useless. He does nothing to enrich the earth; he only encumbers it. His mission has no mercy in it, no sympathy, no ministries of good; it is only and utterly selfish. The poor never bless him. The fatherless never look up to him. The widow's tears and thanks never reward him. His name, which he might have embalmed in a thousand grateful hearts, is spoken and remembered only in sorrow, if not with execration. And though his wealth may rear a splendid monument over his ashes, and emblazon on it a high-sounding epitaph, yet will it only serve to invite the finger of scorn, and posterity will pronounce him:

"Creation's blank—creation's blot."

That man is truly rich and happy who has a heart to give freely of what he hath to the cause of human happiness. He may of his abundance, be able to give his thousands and tens of thousands. (Oh, blessed privilege! may God raise up many such in these times!) But if you have only the poor widow's two mites to give, you shall have the reward. No man was ever the poorer for what he gave, from a benevolent feeling, to promote God's glory on the earth, and advance human happiness. And it is only when we give so as to *feel* it; give so as to call the spirit of self-denial into action; give so as to bring the soul into sympathy with the Cross, that we experience the full luxury of giving—the value of property as a means of noble happiness. Then it is that the increase, a thousand fold, returns into our own heart, and the two mites of pious sacrifice swell into a great blessing and a precious memorial.

3. The principle of the text holds good *in its application to personal efforts for the salvation of souls*. In religion as in other things God has ordained that if we will not work, neither shall we eat; if we fail to sow, we shall not reap; if we will not do our duty, we shall not be blessed. The Christian who never loses sight of self; whose chief anxiety is about his own hopes and welfare; who puts forth no earnest efforts, and is willing to make no sacrifices to save others—will find religion very barren of comfort, and will have abundant occasion to exclaim, "Oh, my leanness! my leanness!" "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to pov-

erty." The experience of Christian life furnishes striking exemplifications of this principle. The more we do to bless others, the more we ourselves are blessed: while watering others our own souls are refreshed. The less selfish and the more expansive and Christ-like is our piety, the more will our own graces flourish, and our enjoyment of God's service be increased. The active, working, pains-taking, self-denying disciple is always blessed—his hope is always joyful and bright, and his faith strong; while the indolent, self-indulgent, ease taking disciple is always complaining of doubt, and weakness, and despondency.

I appeal to your own experience if it be not so. When have you enjoyed religion most? When has your mind been freest from doubt? When have you had the greatest freedom and satisfaction in prayer? When has the largest measure of spiritual prosperity been meted out to you? I can answer for you. It was when the glory of God so filled your mind, and a care for others so weighed on your soul, that you forgot self entirely; it was when you were most active, and faithful, and self-denying in Christian duty, and gave yourself up to the blessed work of saving men and honoring God. If ever the smiles of a Saviour's love gladdened your heart, and the peace and joy of angels welled up in your souls, it has been in those times and exercises which baptized you into the spirit of the Cross, and made you for the time dead to every consideration but the honor of Christ and the salvation of souls.

It is on this principle that Christians are, generally, so joyful and so prosperous in times of revival. Their attention, and anxiety, and efforts, are now directed mainly to the conversion of sinners and the prosperity of Zion. The Spirit of God rouses them to action. The Providence of God thrusts them forth into his vineyard to work. Baptized afresh into Christ, their hearts now burn with zeal for God's glory, and melt and flow out in prayer and pious labor. Self is forgotten. They cease to pore over their gloomy experience. The pressure of dying souls is felt. The cry of anxious souls thrills them; and the new song, bursting from fresh converts, inspires them with new life.

Such a season is not only one of great spiritual rejoicing and comfort, but also one of rapid growth in grace. Many a Christian and many a church has experienced and manifested more of the divine power of the Christian religion in a single revival than during an age of ordinary life.

The story of the Alpine traveler illustrates this subject. A solitary man was overtaken in one of those fearful storms which rage in those lofty mountains. He lost his way, and after wandering about for days became too exhausted to proceed farther, and laid down on the snow to die. Soon he heard a faint voice crying, "Help! help!" It was the voice of suffering humanity,



and it went to his heart. It was the cry, doubtless, of a fellow-traveler, lost and dying in those eternal solitudes, and it roused his own fainting and dying nature. He could not lie there and die with that plaintive cry for help sounding in his ears. With a desperate effort he roused himself from his lethargic state, and made his way whence the sound seemed to come. He found a man nearly buried in the snow, his limbs rigid, and life fast ebbing away. The sight appealed to his humanity and quickened his energies. He knelt down by him and began to rub and chafe the benumbed limbs. His heart warmed toward the helpless stranger while thus engaged, and for an hour or more he continued the life-restoring work, till the man revived and stood upon his feet, and with tears of gratitude thanked his unknown deliverer. *And the very effort to give life to another had brought back the warm blood into his own veins and saved his life.* And now the sound of a distant horn announced the approach of a guide, and they were both saved. So true are our Saviour's words: "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

4. One application more of the text and I will close. *It is blessed to dispense good in the various kind offices and ministries of social life.* In a world so full of sin and sorrow and want and suffering, there is need of kindly sympathy and aid, and the constant interchange of civility, attentions, and brotherly services. Whatever our station and circumstances in life may be, we are not independent of our fellow-men; we can not afford to forego their sympathies and services. And this is especially true of the poor and friendless, the lonely widow and dependent orphan, the sick and afflicted and unfortunate. Such stand in great need of human aid and sympathy. And it is a privilege an angel might covet, to be an almoner of God's bounty to his needy children, and a ministering spirit to the sorrowful and the suffering. To be permitted to dry up many a stream of human misery and guilt—to make glad many heavy hearts—to open fountains of useful knowledge and life in this desolate world—and to help on the cause of humanity and religion, affords as noble a happiness—I say it reverently—as Heaven itself has to offer. How significant is the apostle's definition of religion: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." And was ever a man the poorer, the less happy, the less respected and loved, for thus treading in the footsteps of the divine Jesus?

There would be fewer unhappy children of affluence and leisure in the world if they only acted on the principle of this high law. They would not complain so much as now of *ennui*; time would

not drag on in so dull and monotonous a round; they would not be so overburdened with sentimentality, and corrupt to the core of their nature by innate selfishness, if they would live for some useful object; if they would go forth and put their hearts in contact with the actual world of suffering and sorrowing humanity; explore the wants and woes of their less favored brothers and sisters; carry the tract and the Bible to the ignorant and the wayward; minister at the bedside of the sick and wounded and dying; and have an eye and a heart and a blessing for mankind under every want and burden. Such a ministry of active benevolence would soon dissipate life's dullness, cure them of their false notions and mock sensibilities, eat out the mean and enervating selfishness of their hearts, and teach them that the high end of life is to be like God, the great fountain of good—to borrow light and life from the central sun of all being but to reflect it forth throughout our appointed orbit. The "Ragged-Schools" system of London, and the "Five-Points" missionary enterprise of New-York, and various similar works of Christian reform, and the example of such heroic and self-sacrificing maidens as Florence Nightingale, are teaching woman that she has a higher and a more blessed mission on earth to accomplish than to shine in the saloons of fashion, or dream away existence on the couch of luxurious ease, or fritter mind and heart away over fictitious beings and sorrows. None can perform the grateful ministries of social life like woman; and nothing will do so much to elevate and ennoble woman herself, and give her power for good, and ally her with angelic beings, as a full measure of this new baptism of Christ-like sympathy and self-sacrifice which has begun to descend upon the sex. Oh, for a full measure of the baptism!

"Tis a little thing,  
To give a cup of water; yet its draught  
Of cool refreshment, drained by fevered lips,  
May give a shock of pleasure to the frame,  
More exquisite than when nectarian juice  
Renews the life of joy in happier hours.  
It is a little thing to speak a phrase  
Of common comfort, which by daily use  
Has almost lost its sense; yet on the ear  
Of him who thought to die unmourned, 'twill fall  
Like choicest music."

How brilliant is yonder sun! For sixty centuries he has rolled through these heavens, and dispensed light and health to all the earth, and yet he has lost none of his glory or power. He is ever giving forth floods of light and heat, and receiving nothing back—a fact which our philosophy has not been able fully to explain—and yet the supply is not diminished, he is as full of blessing to-day and as rich in beauty as in the day when Adam first bask-

ed in his genial rays. Emblem of the infinite God! So he is ever giving. There is a ceaseless and infinite flow of power, wisdom, and goodness from him. The universe, with all its teeming worlds of beauty and grandeur and forms of life, is but the outgoing of his infinite mind. He is never weary in giving. There is an infinite tide all the while flowing out, and yet the ocean is not empty. Giving doth not impoverish, nor withholding enrich him. It is his happiness to communicate freely of himself.

And this is the law of heaven. The angels know no other. They are perfectly happy, for they are perfectly benevolent. And this law, made the basis and rule of human conduct, would make a heaven of our world.

Brethren! we only *half believe the Bible*, so imperfectly have we studied and practiced its teachings. There are depths of meaning in its promises which our weak faith has never yet sounded. There are heights of glory and blessedness in its provisions which our groveling souls have never attained to. There is a breadth and power of life in its principles of which we have no adequate conception. We need a stronger faith. We need a more intimate and habitual communion with the life and work of Christ, and the great and eternal principles which underlie them. Oh! when shall the church of redeemed sinners come to understand this chief law of Heaven, and give to the world the practical benefits of that knowledge and experience, "It is more blessed to give than to receive?"

## THE PRAYER-MEETING.

### Prayer Answered.

ABRAHAM prayed, "O that Ishmael might live before thee;" and God said, "As for Ishmael, I have heard thee." Lot prayed, and Zoar became a city of refuge for him, while Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed. Jacob prayed, and his name was changed to Israel. His descendants cried to God in their bondage, and he stretched out the right hand of his power for their deliverance. Moses cried unto the Lord, and the wa-

ters gushed from Horeb. Hannah prayed, and then testified, "The Lord hath given me my petition." Samuel besought Jehovah in Israel's behalf, and great thunder discomfited the Philistines. Solomon had a wise and an understanding heart because he had asked this thing. Elijah on Carmel prayed, "Hear me, O Lord, hear me." Soon the multitude exclaimed, "The Lord he is the God; the Lord he is the God." Elijah prayed, and the Shunamite's

son breathed again. Hezekiah prayed, and the shadow went backward ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz. Asa cried unto the Lord, and the Ethiopians fled before him and Judah. Jehoshaphat prayed, and Judah and Jerusalem saw the salvation of God. Nehemiah made prayer unto God amid the tauntings of enemies, and saw them silenced under the power of Jehovah. David, in trouble, called upon the Lord, and deliverance came to him, and mercy to his seed for evermore. Jeremiah cries in our hearing unto the Lord, "Thou hast heard my voice." Gabriel came with swift wing to Daniel to assure him that his supplication was not in vain. From the billow and the wave Jonah sent up his cry, and the Lord heard. Zacharias prayed, and an angel from the presence of God came with glad tidings. Bartimeus cried aloud, and glorified God for sight bestowed. The dying thief uttered one prayer, and Paradise opened its gates to receive him.

#### Blessedness of Believing.

THE happiness we derive from creatures is like a beggar's garment—it is made up of pieces and patches, and is worth very little after all. But the blessedness we derive from the Saviour is single and complete. In him all fullness dwells. He is coeval with every period. He is answerable to every condition. He is a Physician to heal, a Counselor to plead, a King to govern, a Friend to sympathize, a Father to provide.

He is a Foundation to sustain, a Root to enliven, a Fountain to refresh. He is the Shadow from the heat, the Bread of life, the Morning Star, the Sun of Righteousness; *all, and in all*. No creature can be a substitute for him; but he can supply the place of every creature. He is all my salvation, and all my desire; my hope, my peace, my life, my glory and joy.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but thou art the strength of my heart and my portion forever. I can not be exposed, I can not be friendless, I can not be poor, I can not be fearful, I can not be sorrowful, with thee.

#### Every Man's Work made Manifest.

THE disclosures of the judgment will be exhaustive. There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known! Much of the past with us is forgotten. Its errors, its down-right sins—we have passed them by, and fondly hope they may never afflict us with their bitter upbraidings; but the books will be opened, and on their radiant pages the whole story of human guilt will be found faithfully recorded. We had forgotten, but it was not forgotten, for the infinite memory of God had treasured all within the resources of the eternal mind, and in the great day of account they will be all marshaled forth to confront the soul with all the reality of their fearful revelations.